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SUBJECT: Hellenic Police Chief on Security Service Reorganization,
Migration, C/T Cooperation

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a meeting on 21 January Hellenic National Police (HNP) Chief Ikonomou told the Ambassador that the reorganization of the Ministry of Citizen Protection was far from complete, but that the overall goal was to foster interagency cooperation across Greece's non-military security agencies. The HNP itself will be reorganized, beginning with the creation of a new organized crime task force modeled on the FBI. The problem of illegal immigration into Greece requires political solutions on the international level, but in the meantime Greece is sealing its exit points to prevent organized crime rings and the immigrants themselves from moving on to Western Europe. Ikonomou condemned the recent attack on a synagogue in Chania, Crete, and declared no tolerance for anti-Semitic and extreme-right violence. He said that domestic terrorism was a top priority for the police and predicted that the main terrorist groups would be dismantled in the relatively near future. He reacted positively to the Ambassador's proposal to create a local working group on counterterrorist consisting of senior HNP and EYP officials on the Greek side and FBI and other embassy officials on the U.S. side. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On 21 January 2010 the Ambassador met for 75 minutes with the chief of the Hellenic National Police (HNP), Eleftherios Ikonomou, in the latter's office at the headquarters of the Ministry of Citizen Protection (MCP). This was the second in a series of meetings by the Ambassador to hear from senior Greek officials about the ongoing reorganization of Greece's security, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies under the umbrella of the MCP, which was formed in October 2009. (The Ambassador's meeting with the commandant of the Hellenic Coast Guard [HCG] on 20 January was reported in refTel.) Ikonomou became chief of the HNP on November 5, 2009, after the previous chief, Vasileios Tsiatouras, was unceremoniously and quite publicly fired on October 22 by the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection, Michalis Chrysochoidis. The Ambassador was accompanied by the DCM, the RAS chief, the Legatt, the ICE chief, and an LES interpreter, while Ikonomou was unaccompanied.

¶3. (SBU) This was the Ambassador's first meeting with Ikonomou, so he began the meeting by congratulating Ikonomou on his appointment, expressing appreciation for the importance of his position for Greek society, and wishing him good luck in his duties. The Ambassador also extended his profound thanks for the excellent work done by the HNP to safeguard his personal security and to protect the embassy's facilities and personnel. In reply, Ikonomou thanked the Ambassador for opening up a direct channel of communication. He commented on the historically close ties between Greece and the United States and praised the extensive cooperation between the two countries in the area of security. He stated that "the challenges of the times" required even closer collaboration, which he pledged to pursue.

Hellenic National Police Reorganization

¶4. (SBU) Opening the substantive portion of the meeting, the Ambassador asked Ikonomou for his assessment of how the reorganization of the HNP was proceeding under the plans sketched

out by Chrysochoidis. Ikonomou replied that the restructuring of the MCP was still in process, but its overarching goal was to organize Greece's security agencies in a way that fostered cooperation. He described the decision to create the MCP on the basis of the former Ministry of Public Order but to fold in a number of agencies that had belonged to other government elements, most notably the HCG in its new form but also Civil Defense. It was essential to bring all of these agencies into the same structure, so that they could share a common base that spurred interaction institutionally and personally. Personal ties were essential, Ikonomou continued, noting that the new Deputy Director General of the Greek National Intelligence Service (EYP), Fotis Papageorgiou, was a long-time police official who formerly had headed the HNP's Counterterrorism Unit. Ikonomou pointed out that he and the Director General of EYP, Konstantinos Bikas, have traveled together to Italy and France to hold discussions on bilateral cooperation. In essence, Chrysochoidis was mandating the creation within the MCP of a crisis-management system of the sort that characterized the various Greek agencies in the run-up to the Olympic Games in 2004, when all agencies worked together, many officers received training in modern security techniques, and many officers served rotations in other agencies.

15. (SBU) The Ambassador recognized the importance of close interaction between senior agency officials, but asked how much progress was being made at integrating the new constituent elements of the MCP at the working level. Ikonomou admitted that much work remained to be done in this regard. He cited the challenge of fingerprinting illegal immigrants detained at border points. In Greece only the HNP's Criminal Investigations Directorate is

allowed to process and store fingerprints, but its capabilities and work practices are ill suited to the task. As a result, an initiative is underway to speed up access to this information and to employ modern technology to store and analyze data, so that an official at the border could search against the database and have immediate connectivity and results. It is also essential that these databases be linked in some way the resources and information held by other countries, including the United States, via the most modern software.

The Challenge from Illegal Migration

16. (SBU) Ikonomou described the Greek government's strategy for dealing with the challenge posed by illegal immigration. Most important, the borders need to be defended as well as possible. This will require close cooperation between the MCP's elements, especially HNP and HCG, and the military, including the army and the navy. The biggest problem is along Greece's eastern border, since Turkey is not making any meaningful effort to stop the flow of illegal immigrants across both the land and sea borders. Ikonomou said that he appreciated that Turkey has its own problems with illegal immigration, which is why this is a problem for the international community that ultimately has to take into consideration the countries of origin. He pointed out that if the Greek authorities detained a Pakistani entering Greece illegally from Turkey, the illegal immigrant needed ultimately to be returned to Pakistan and not to Turkey. Given the possibility of the radicalization of illegal immigrants and refugees indefinitely staying in Greece, the government wants the European and international communities to focus on this issue as soon as possible.

17. (SBU) In the meantime, Ikonomou continued, Greece was taking some strong short-term actions. Most notably, the authorities were sealing Greece's exits to Western Europe, especially the ports of Corinth, Patras, and Igoumenitsa, as well as the airports in Athens and Thessaloniki. In their recent trip to Italy Ikonomou and Bikas explained this approach to their Italian counterparts, so that the services of both countries could conduct joint operations, share best practices, etc. By closing the exits, Greece wants to send a strong message to the organized-crime rings, as well as the illegal immigrants themselves, that they cannot achieve their dreams of getting to Western Europe through Greece.

Organized Crime Task Force

18. (SBU) The Ambassador asked for an update on plans to create a new body within the HNP to deal with organized crime. Ikonomou replied that he was in full agreement with Chrysochoidis that the HNP needed a task force with jurisdiction over all Greek territory that dealt with serious crimes. The MCP is still studying what kind of task force to create, although its outline is taking shape. It will report directly to the HNP chief. It will have divisions for cyber crime, homicides, robberies, kidnappings, extortion, economic crime, and human trafficking. A decision has not been made yet about what to do with counterterrorism, whether to make it a division within this task force or to create a separate counterterrorism entity. The task force will have intelligence and analytical sections to collate, process, and study information from casework and ongoing investigations that is centralized in a single database. The software will ensure interconnectivity with other agencies, especially the HCG. It is intended to be a "small FBI," building up from an initial group of 100 newly hired specialists, for whose positions vacancy notice already have been issued.

Chania Synagogue Arson

19. (SBU) Replying to a direct question from the Ambassador, Ikonomou condemned the arson attack of January 16 on a synagogue in Chania, Crete. He said that the HNP was taking the issue very seriously. He stressed that the police would have no tolerance for anti-Semitic or extreme-right violence in any form. The police had been caught off guard, because there had not been any previous problems in that region. The HNP has now instituted security measures around the synagogue and is investigating the incident fully.

C/T Cooperation

110. (SBU) Asked for an update on the RPG attack against the embassy in January 2007, Ikonomou stated that combating Greek domestic terrorism was a top priority for the HNP. He said that terrorist acts were condemnable from any point of view. Domestic

terrorism was problematic not only because of its past focus on diplomatic missions, but also because of its potential to destabilize Greek society. Ikonomou said that the U.S. side knows what the HNP knows about domestic terrorists, because it shares all of its information. He would not predict the timing of any arrests, but expressed optimism that the HNP was making significant progress and would be able in the relatively near future to dismantle these organizations. He stressed that it was important to act as soon as possible, because the groups on the extreme left acted as "waiting rooms" for future terrorists and because of the increasing intersection of domestic terrorist groups and organized crime. Ikonomou concluded by telling the ambassador that he should not hesitate to call him directly if he had any question or problem related to domestic terrorism.

111. (SBU) The Ambassador, reviewing briefly the history of counterterrorist training provided to the HNP, especially by FBI, DEA, and ICE, urged the HNP to forward requests for training to assist with its reorganization and to instill new skills in its changing workforce. The ambassador proposed to Ikonomou that the two sides consider forming a local working group composed of senior HNP and EYP officials on the Greek side and senior FBI and embassy security officials on the U.S. side to discuss on a monthly basis the status and requirements of collaboration against domestic and international terrorists. Ikonomou replied that he was positively disposed to the idea and promised to discuss the notion with the leadership of EYP.
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